

Summary of Programmatic Approach & Level of Detail

Water Quality Component

The Delta is a source of drinking water for millions of Californians and is critical to the State's agricultural industry. Appropriate water quality and sufficient nutrients are required to maintain the high quality habitat necessary to support a diversity of fish and wildlife populations. CALFED is working to improve urban, agricultural and environmental water quality. At the programmatic level the Water Quality program will focus on pollutant source control. Reducing the total pollutant load entering the Delta will provide benefits for all water users.

Program Level Actions - Level of Detail

The Water Quality component is intended to provide an approach to improve the quality of water for all beneficial uses in the Bay-Delta. Its function is to provide a direction rather than a prescription for future actions. The actions recommended within the Water Quality component will be presented as estimates and ranges which provide reasonable upper and lower limits of what is likely to be required to successfully achieve the Water Quality objectives. Upper and lower limits of the ranges will be explained and justified so there is a common understanding as to why these limits were established. The Water Quality component is not intended to be specific as to project locations, sizes, volumes, or specific actions.

The following are examples of an appropriate Water Quality component program level action, an action which is too general to provide sufficient information, and an example of a project level action which is too specific for the programmatic evaluation which is being conducted.

Appropriate Program Level Action

Reduce urban and industrial constituent loadings to the Delta by detention and strategic release of 20 to 30 percent of runoff water.

Too General:

Reduce urban and industrial constituent loadings to the Delta.

Project Level Action - Too Specific:

Reduce urban and industrial constituent loadings to the Delta by constructing a 20 acre foot detention basin north of Rio Vista on the Corps dredge spoil site.

Programmatic Impact Analysis

The assessment process and impact analysis for the Water Quality component will be used to measure and discuss changes in urban, agricultural and environmental water quality, distinguish the relative differences between the alternatives, and identify adverse and beneficial impacts for each of the alternatives when compared to the No Action Alternative and existing conditions.

The assessment process for water quality is being developed with assistance from agency and stakeholder technical experts through a Water Quality Technical Group which originally consisted of three separate teams representing urban, agricultural and environmental water quality. The three original teams identified water quality assessment variables, target ranges for these variables and a list of potential actions to improve water quality within these three focus areas. The Water Quality Technical Group is charged with integrating the three focus areas into a common approach.

The assessment process for urban, agricultural and environmental water quality will evaluate changes to assessment variables identified by the Water Quality Technical Group. Delta water quality is linked very closely to water management activities and indirectly to a wide range of human actions. Existing water quality data representing a variety of water quality assessment variables will be evaluated and used to assess changes primarily related to source control actions. Models which simulate the movement of water through the system, such as DWRSIM and others used by the storage and conveyance component, will be used to provide the conceptual foundation for evaluation of water quality impacts related to flow.

Presentation of Results

Results from impact analysis will be presented in both the Technical Reports for each resource category and the Programmatic EIR/EIS. The Technical Reports will be used to display the detailed results of impact analysis. These results will be summarized, and the summaries will be presented in the Programmatic EIR/EIS.

Technical Reports

The Technical Reports will identify differences between the Preferred Program and each of the alternatives when compared to the No Action Alternative. To ensure no potential adverse impacts are overlooked or diminished, there will also be a comparison of the Preferred Program and each of the alternatives to existing conditions. These Technical Reports will contain information on the specific assessment methods used, the criteria used for determining significance, presentation of direct and indirect adverse and beneficial impacts for each identified assessment variable, identification of potentially significant impacts and associated mitigation strategies for addressing significant impacts, and identification of potential significant unavoidable impacts. For example, changes in storm water runoff resulting from source control actions would be measured by using existing storm water data for quality and volume, and calculating the range of change which could occur as a result of the source control action.

Programmatic EIR/EIS

Results from impact analysis will be summarized in the Programmatic EIR/EIS. When presenting results in the Programmatic EIR/EIS, emphasis will be placed on identifying the differences between the alternatives. Impact analysis is not intended to provide specific quantities or numbers relative to changes in resource categories, level of impact or mitigation strategies. An effort will be made to present results in a tabular format for easy comparison, and establish the potential relative magnitude of change within each resource category such as a high, medium or low level of improvement when comparing the preferred program and each of the alternatives.

Summarized results from impact analysis presented in the Programmatic EIR/EIS will be used to:

- Evaluate how well the preferred and alternative programs meet the Program goals and objectives, conform with the Program's solution principles and achieve short- and long-term acceptability; and
- Identify potential improvements or degradation within each resource category for the preferred and alternative programs.